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Washington's Mr. Fixit

The new boss of the Central Intelligence Agency has had a remarkably diversified career but no experience in the cloak and dagger business.

John A. McCone, 59, who will work alongside his predecessor, Allen W. Dulles, until the latter's official retirement November 1, is a California businessman and Eisenhower Republican who was chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission in the last administration.

THOUGH HE HAS been described as "the very model of a model 'modern Republican,'" McCone also has served in previous Democratic administrations. He was a member of President Truman's 1947 Air Policy Commission, the report of which is credited with sparking the modernization of air defense policies. In 1948 he helped Defense Secretary James Forrestal draw up the first Defense Department's budget. And in 1950 he became undersecretary of the Air Force.

McCone was a strong advocate of greater air power, and he tried to persuade President Truman to put the missile program under a single czar.

Had that been done this country might not have fallen so far behind Russia in space projects.

A one-time riveter who became a construction engineer and went on to become a large manufacturer and industrialist, McCone is said to be a man "with a slide-rule mind." He has a flair for quickly analyzing complex problems, and as AEC chairman he won a reputation for keeping a secret, a major requisite for CIA director.

President Kennedy sidestepped a possible political hassle by naming McCone to the post.

Had he replaced Dulles with anyone too closely identified with Democratic politics, the CIA itself might have been injured by ensuing partisan missiles. The major espionage agency, said to spend a billion dollars a year and employ more than 12,000 persons throughout the world, has had enough troubles already. Its prestige was hurt as a result of its role in the unsuccessful Cuban invasion last April and the ill-timed loss of a U2 spy plane over Russia last year.

McCONE IS NOT new to controversial, ticklish situations. When he became AEC chairman in 1958, a major task was to restore harmonious relations between the Democratic-controlled Senate and the administration. Admiral Lewis Strauss, his predecessor, had lost a bitter struggle with New Mexico's Senator Clinton Anderson, who was supported by other members of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.

McCone did a noble repair job in short time.

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We are confident he will do a good job as CIA director.

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